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ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CURRICULUM

James O. Buswell, III

Anthropology courses in Christian Schools should have the following as three of their primary objectives: (1) To cover adequately the normal academic scope of the subject of each course at a scholastic level equal at least to that of the existing secular educational standards. (2) To emphasize as its primary applied function for Christians the exceedingly important roles anthropology plays in (a) the training of missionaries and prospective missionaries in an understanding of the profound cultural implications and the far-reaching social, as well as spiritual changes resulting from the propogation of the Gospel among foreign peoples; (b) providing within the context of Christian absolutes, an objective appraisal and understanding of relative cultural values and racial differences, breaking down preconceived notions of racial inequality and ethnocentrism. (3) Using scientific data from the study of prehistoric human cultural and physical remains, and a thorough examination of present-day evolutionary theory, to provide a supplementary frame of reference for a scholarly system of apologetics.

Partly due to the recency of its establishment as a recognized science, and partly because of the inevitable association of its subject matter with either exotic non-essentials or with atheistic notions, anthropology has never enjoyed un-biased acceptance in Christian circles. Its treatment has been characterized by everything from mild curiosity to active hostility.

Robert B. Taylor has written, "One of the biggest tasks for the Christian professional anthropologist... is the demonstration of anthropology's relevance to Christianity."[1] Elsewhere he has pointed out that "anthropology, as the science of man, has as much importance for Christian thought and behavior as any academic discipline, and perhaps more."[2] This importance, the unique educational values, the integrative scope, and the broadening outlook, has been screened behind the

equally unique but often emotion-ridden subject matter.

It is almost impossible to conduct a dispassionate discussion of prehistoric man, racial equality, or the social impact of the Gospel, in the Christian classroom. But behind these areas of controversy lies a science of human physical and cultural description and history whose values for the Christian scholar, though vast indeed, are barely beginning to be realized.

It is therefore necessary to present these values in such a way as to broaden the realization of their relevance to, and vital role in Christian education. Robert W. Ehrich has observed that "Anthropology is a latecomer ...to the vested interest arena of the academic disciplines, and it must make its way within an already established framework."[3] This is even more true in Christian education than in the secular academic world.

First of all we will discuss the second of our stated objectives, namely, anthropology's "primary applied function for Christians...the training of missionaries." A discussion of the first objective, namely, the place of anthropology in the standard academic program with special reference to its distinctive liberal-arts contributions, will follow. The third objective has been dealt with in some detail elsewhere.[4]

VOCATIONAL VALUES: MISSIONARY TRAINING

With its emphasis upon field work, anthropology produced a strong necessity for accurate observation and description. The anthropologist has been taught to see man as a whole--to examine the factors influencing every aspect of his behavior. This was only possible in a primitive society where one man could have some chance of learning "all" about it within a reasonable length of time.

This resulted in one of anthropology's greatest assets, the comparative method. With the examination of

many cultures the comparative point of view became basic for all anthropological generalizations. One didn't base ones theories upon the observations of one society. One no longer based ones conclusions or judgements upon the standard of ones own society. This was one of Freud's fundamental errors. The comparative point of view enabled Malinowski to overthrow some of Freud's psychological generalizations upon the basis of a cross-cultural study of the allegedly universal Oedipus complex.

Thus, essentially, the Christian anthropologist maintains the necessity of the missionary distinguishing between what is the absolute in Christianity and thus applicable to all peoples, and the cultural trappings which usually enshroud its presentation as it is superimposed upon various primitive ideologies. The purely cultural, and therefore relative, aspects of Christianity are the areas in which frequent conflicts and difficulties lie.

According to C. M. Arensberg,[5] anthropology is vitally interested in two things which apply directly to the whole missionary enterprise, namely the description of cultural change, and the isolation of the principles which control it, which restrict it, and which hasten it. This is different from the historian's concern with the changes themselves. The world is full of cases, not only of internal cultural change, but, more important, of acculturation, or the impact of one culture upon another. Christian missions constitutes one of the most important, far-reaching, and sustained examples of such processes. Every foreign missionary is, whether he knows it or not, an agent of acculturation.

The cultural repercussions are tremendous. More than that, they are not usually able to be identified until too late to "do" anything about it. Anthropology provides the skills with which to pre-examine and prevent needless cultural disintegration due to factors of acculturation. And in the tracing of these factors the anthropologically trained missionary is in a position to

understand and cope with, or administer, or otherwise deal with the changing culture in terms derived from its own distinctive character. Such a cultural context is, to a very large degree, unknown to, ignored, or otherwise misunderstood by those who would attempt to deal with the changing situation upon the basis of its existing form alone without reference to the antecedents of contact. Even more disastrous is the result when adjustment is attempted in terms of "previous experience" in like situations--in one's own culture.

For the applied anthropologist, as for the missionary, the situations tending to come under his scrutiny are largely experimental ones, and in the widest of cultural contexts. Arensberg has written that

> In business and industry, in government, in psychiatry and social work, (and we may well add, in Christian missions,) the question is constantly being asked: "The situation seems to be thus; suppose we do so and so, what will happen?" In all of these areas experiments are being made daily, and, whether explicitly or not, they are experiments in human relations. It is here that the applied anthropologist finds his laboratory...[6]

Thus, although as applied to the mission field anthropology for the Christian becomes primarily vocational, we find that, far from its being merely vocational in any exclusive sense, it provides the Christian student with techniques for evaluation and strategy in dynamic social situations not only where cross-cultural considerations are concerned, but also for the application of the same techniques--cross-culturally validated--to a wide variety of professional interests in his own society.

Once the missionary has an understanding of the nature of cultural change, has achieved a comparative or relative cultural viewpoint, and is able to discriminate between cultural and supercultural[7] Christianity, the

next vital contribution anthropology offers is the teaching of how to effectively communicate the gospel to another (not necessarily a primitive) culture in terms of that culture's own idiom, customs, and system of values. Dr. Eugene Nida writes that

> ...a close examination of successful missionary work inevitably reveals the correspondingly effective manner in which the missionaries were able to identify themselves with the people--"to be all things to all men"--and to communicate their message in terms which have meaning for the lives of the people. Conversely, where missionary work has been singularly unsuccessful, one will always find a failure to resolve the missionary's two great problems: identification and communication. Successful missionary work should not be judged simply as a question of the number of converts, but of an integrated, self-propagating church, adjusted to the problems and needs of the surrounding culture...[8]

In 1924 Edwin W. Smith, missionary, and later president of the Royal Anthropological Society, wrote, "I should like to see the science of social anthropology recognized as an essential discipline in the training of missionaries."[9]

I would like to quote here a few more passages from this same article which could be duplicated many times in the words of earlier and more recent authors alike.

> Social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science, first, on account of its great utility to missionaries, and second, because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them.
>
> ...One might even go further and say that this study throws considerable light upon our own civilization and religion and should therefore be of use to all clergymen and ministers.

...My point is that a study of social anthropology will lead the young missionary to look at things always from the native's point of view, and this will save him from making many serious blunders. Tact is not enough; nor is love. Robert Morrison loved the Chinese, but love did not prevent his throwing into the fire a piece of paper upon which his Chinese teacher had written some words for him to memorize, and thereby deeply offending the man's feelings. Had Morrison known the sentiments of the Chinese as to paper upon which words of their language are written or printed--had he known of Yuen Liao Fan and the society founded by him three hundred years ago for the Prevention of the Misuse of Paper bearing Chinese Characters, I am sure he would not have offended. The dictionary defines tact as "an intuitive perception of what is fitting" but the most tactful of Britons might automatically throw a piece of paper into the fire without realizing the unfitness of his action. Tact needs to be based on knowledge; love there can hardly be without understanding.

...I should like to quote here from a report drawn up by the British Association:

"An accurate acquaintance with the nature, habits and customs of alien populations is necessary to all who have to live and work amongst them in any official capacity, whether administrators, executive officers, missionaries of merchants, because in order to deal effectively with any group of mankind it is essential to have that cultured sympathy with them which comes of sure knowledge."

These last words, "cultured sympathy which comes of sure knowledge" sum up what I want to say on this part of the subject. All missionaries presumably go to the heathen with some amount of tender emotion; compassion for their helplessness, pity for their degradation, or a more or less sentimental feeling. These are but weak and transient compared with the deep fellow-feeling which is born out of full knowledge.

> ...A study of social anthropology is the father and mother of that cultured sympathy which comes of sure knowledge.
>
> ...All this is an argument for studying native life and thought; but, it may be asked, is it an argument for missionary students studying social anthropology as part of their training? How can it be possible for any lecturer to teach all the customs and beliefs of all peoples to any class of students? At some of the lectures organized by the British Board of Study for the Preparation of Missionaries, thirty students may be present who are going out to perhaps a dozen different fields; complete instruction for them would involve, not only something approaching omniscience in the lecturer but almost individual tuition. But just as it is possible to impart the principles of phonetics to men and women intended for lands so diverse as China, India and Africa, so it is possible to teach the common principles of social anthropology to a class, because underlying all diversities there is a general similarity among the customs and beliefs of backward peoples.
>
> ...At the very least the students can be placed in the right attitude of mind and shown the lines of approach and be given hints as to future study. If they can have specialized training in the life of the actual people to whom they are going so much the better.

In view of the large percentage of graduates of our Christian colleges and Bible schools who go to foreign mission fields,[10] if anthropology constitutes the all-important science for missionary training indicated above, then its existence as a major emphasis in the curricula of such schools is virtually demanded.

LIBERAL ARTS VALUES: INTERDISIPLINARY INTEGRATION

A unique characteristic of anthropology is that its essential subject matter embraces portions of the

physical and social sciences as well as the humanities. Physical anthropology, of course, with its traditional concern with problems of evolution and race, is very closely allied with geology, osteology, and biology; cultural anthropology, with its concern for the various aspects of human society, makes much use of the field of sociology, comparative religion, jurisprudence, economics and technology. And one needs but to mention anthropology's concern with comparative and descriptive linguistics, and primitive art, music, and folklore to see the relationship of the humanities with the "science of man."

On the course level, there are many overlaps which exist. These overlaps, however, are largely limited to subject matter and not to approach or treatment of it. For example, a biological overlap is one of genetics and anatomy, but anthropology's concern is limited to human genetics, and the specific study of comparative human anatomy. The sociological overlap involves principles of social organization and social dynamics--a concern with institutions and their interrelations. But, whereas sociology's concern is largely descriptive, anthropology's is comparative; where sociology's is socially, or "institutionally" oriented, anthropology's is culturally oriented--concerned with aspects of culture rather than primarily with structure of society. And where the sociologist's concern is with his own society, the anthropologist's is chiefly with the cultures of others.

Many Christian schools are beginning to recognize the need for at least one course in anthropology. Usually this is offered by a teacher trained in one of the other socail sciences or by one trained in Bible, or in many cases, a returned missionary. This means that either the subject is being taught (a) in connection with a major in another field; (b) by a teacher who is not trained in anthropology; or both. I would not want to discourage the inclusion of anthropology in a

curriculum under these conditions in schools which cannot do otherwise. But while there exists a large area of common ground to cover, together with many common problems to study which can be handled respectively by the social scientist, the theologian, or the missionary, nevertheless the approach, treatment, and goals of other disciplines are only merged on the level of the college curriculum at the expense of the distinctive contributions of one or both. William Howells makes this very clear when he observes that courses in anthropology

> should ideally be taught by an anthropologist rather than by, say, a versatile sociologist, for teaching the materials of anthropology and treating these materials with the essential viewpoint of anthropology are two different things.[11]

It really makes relatively little difference, if anthropology does not constitute its own exclusive department, just what department it is combined with. Throughout the country anthropology is combined departmentally with various fields. At Columbia Graduate School, anthropology is with psychology under the Faculty of Political Science. Other working combinations find anthropology with archaeology, sociology, missions, or apologetics. Probably in a Christian School a Department of Anthropology and Missions would be ideal. If such a department cannot be established at once, the missionary emphasis lies closest to the social science courses, rather, even, than to the Bible department. Again it is a case of approach and the primary concern with cultural rather than theological matters.

Let us then examine anthropology's social science and residual components with reference to their value for the Christian curriculum.

William Howells calls anthropology "the most general of the social sciences."[12] But more than this, some unique characteristics of anthropology as a liberal arts pillar are indicated in his further statements that:

> ...it is not merely the science which is the gathering point of the other social sciences; it is both a social and a natural science, and is the present science of man.[13]

Its integrative qualities for the student, no matter what his major interests are, prompt Howells to urge its adoption into the "small liberal arts colleges" as "the kernel of social science." He points out that

> In these very years universities are constantly instituting programs which, whatever their exact form, have as their purpose the unification for undergraduate students of that material usually known as the required courses, or the courses for distribution, and normally meant for the freshman and sophomore years. It is here that anthropology, having undergone a natural process of integration itself, finds an opportunity to serve, in partnership with the basic humanities, as the catalyst of a humanistic interest in all the other subjects, particularly social.[14]

Along these same lines, Professor Kroeber has also indicated anthropology's unique position in a social science setting. While he points out that "the prevailing placement of anthropology in contemporary American universities is in the social sciences," he also adds that this is likely to be favored by administrators because "social science is easily adapted to mass educations, and in research it largely avoids the problems of expense set by maintenance of laboratories, collections, and work in distant fields."[15] Now if anthropology were to assume only the proportions of a social science, then its adoption by and combination with a sociology or other social studies major as merely a supporting field should be the natural organizational solution. But notice Kroeber's next observation:

> There is also a widespread assumption by the public at large and among students that the social sciences

> have practical value and are directly useful. Such a claim can hardly be made for knowledge of fossil man, early prehistory, native languages, primitive customs, or culture history.[16]

--except in the curriculum of a Christian school whose special concern in this regard is with the whole matter of antiquity for apologetics, and primitive language and culture for missions! Because of this unique "practical value" which exists for Christian education, anthropology more than ever should be considered not merely as a branch of social studies but in terms of its broader applicability to the well-prepared Christian graduate.

Another very significant contrast is shown by the difference in the number of undergraduate anthropology majors in proportion to the total enrollment in secular schools, as compared with the proportion existing at Wheaton College, which has the only undergraduate major program in a Christian college at present. At Brooklyn College, for example, with a daytime undergraduate enrollment of approximately eight thousand students there is a "small number of anthropology majors, seldom more than ten at any one time..."[17] At the University of Utah with an enrollment of nearly 900 in undergraduate anthropology courses alone in 1953-54, there were only six majors, and only nine for the year 1954-55. At Wheaton, on the other hand, with a total undergraduate enrollment of only 1600 students there have consistently been between a dozen and 25 anthropology majors, the present number being 21. The vocational concern with missions is the obvious answer to the difference. However, let me hasten to point out that the secular schools by no means have proportionately smaller departments. Brooklyn College has four and Utah has seven full-time anthropologists to Wheaton's one. The reason for this is a most important and fundamental factor in the role anthropology plays in the liberal arts curriculum as was suggested by Kroeber and Howells above. Robert Ehrich puts it this way:

> Anthropology as a subject has much to contribute to the non-professional student in attitude, point of view, methodological attack, and manner of approach, and...it can effectively supplement the work of other disciplines in helping the student to shape his personal philosophy.[18]

He further points out that

> Anthropology per se can contribute much in the way of material, insight, and attitude to students whose major fields are in other departments.[19]

Howells called it the "catalyst" of the sciences of humanity. Ehrich says that "by virtue of its amorphous nature, anthropology allows for interdisciplinary cooperation..."[20]

How is this revealed by these departments in secular schools? At Brooklyn College "there is sufficient student demand to maintain eight different advanced courses that are classed as strictly anthropological in nature."[21] At Utah in 1954 there were 922 students enrolled in 36 anthropology course sections. Thus one of the chief values of anthropology as an integrative discipline is strikingly revealed. And if it is such for the secular student, it should be recognized as having the same value for Christians, and developed accordingly in the Christian curriculum.

Our Christian colleges would not think of being without such traditionally major departments as English, History, and Mathematics. These are vital to provide basic tools for educated Christians to use in any walk of life. The offerings of psychology and sociology, chemistry and physics, music and public speaking, among others, are only slightly less generally applicable in their contributions to graduates in other fields.

Christian colleges are concerned with producing Christian graduates, and to that extent the college

program must be considered "vocationally" oriented even within a broader liberal-arts context. In other words, an anthropology major in a "liberal-arts" education for the Christian cannot be completely non-vocational in general any more than that of education majors, pre-meds, or music majors. Nevertheless, we can agree with Ehrich that anthropology "does provide a natural co-ordinating medium within the objectives of a liberal-arts education"[22] and as such, involves concepts and skills which are vital to the well-educated Christian.

This presentation is only an introduction to the values and characteristics of the anthropological contributions to liberal-arts education. Time and space prevent more than passing mention of such aspects as the values of linguistic insights into other languages and modes of thought; the importance of the basically historical orientation of American anthropology; the relevance of the functionalist point of view for the educated Christian; not to mention other valuable integrative emphases upon religious, political, economic, and geographical considerations.

It is hoped, however, that this brief inspection of some of the outstanding features of the subject will bring into clearer focus the tremendous potential anthropology has for the Christian academic program.

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NOTES

1. Taylor, 1955b, p. 30
2. Taylor, 1955a, p. 1
3. Ehrich, 1954, p. 362
4. Buswell, J. O., III, "Anthropology and the Study of Evolution." Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Vol. 6, No. 3, (Sept., 1954) pp. 5-8.
5. Arensberg, 1950, p. 4.

6. Ibid.
7. An able treatment of this distinction may be found in Wm. Smalley and M. Fetzer, "A Christian View of Anthropology" in Modern Science and Christian Faith. Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1950, pp. 101-105.
8. Nida, 1954, pp. 250-1.
9. Smith, 1924, p. 519
10. Over 11% in one liberal-arts college; probably much higher in Bible colleges and institutes.
11. Howells, 1952, p. 7
12. Op. cit., p. 4
13. Op. cit., p. 6
14. Ibid.
15. Kroeber, 1954, p. 767
16. Ibid.
17. Ehrich, 1954, p. 359
18. Op. cit., pp. 357-8
19. Op. cit., p. 359
20. Op. cit., p. 357
21. Op. cit., p. 359
22. Op. cit., p. 362

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REVIEW

HUMAN PROBLEMS IN TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE. Edward H. Spicer, Ed., Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1952, 300 pp.

All those who are interested in the problems of cultural change, and this should include all missionaries, will find this casebook of applied anthropology of interest and profit.

As the title indicates, most of the fifteen cases presented are of a technological or economic nature, but since technology is but one aspect of culture the principles of change involved apply to culture as a whole, religion and morality included.

The significance of the problem of change as conceived by the editor, E. H. Spicer, is well put in the introduction to the book. I quote in part.

> Changing people's customs is an even more delicate responsibility than surgery. When a surgeon takes up his instruments he assumes the responsibility for a human life...On his knowledge..., and on his ability to apply that knowledge..., rests the well-being and the happiness of his patient.
>
> The administrator of a program of technological change carries a heavier responsibility. Whenever he seeks to alter a people's way of life, he is dealing not with one individual, but with the well-being and happiness of generations of men and women. (p. 13)

The book, then, is an attempt to provide the student with a basic knowledge and appreciation of what is involved in clutural change. This is interestingly and effectively done by the presentation of several accounts of actual situations where change has occurred. Each of

these case studies follows the same plan. First the problem is stated; then the course of events is described; the factors relevant to the situation of change are analyzed; the outcome is described; and then the study is completed with the writer's interpretation and analysis. It is suggested that the student work out his answers to the problem before continuing to the sections dealing with the outcome and the analysis. To aid in this, six brief sections entitled "Suggestions for Study" are dispersed throughout the book. One of the most helpful is a checklist of questions which one might ask concerning the situation of change. These suggestions add considerably to the value of the book.

This book is addressed to practical workers as well as anthropologists. The problems are simply and effectively presented. The book is not long and is not loaded with social scientific jargon. In my opinion study of this book is one of the simplest ways for the missionary or anyone else involved in situations of cultural change to begin his study of cultural change.

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EDITORIAL REMARKS

This Issue

We are glad to have our first article from the pen of James O. Buswell, III, anthropology instructor at Wheaton College. Before taking up his teaching duties at Wheaton in 1954 Mr. Buswell taught anthropology at Shelton College. He holds a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania.

NOTES AND NEWS

Missions Executives Suggest Anthropology Major

Claude Stipe, instructor in missions and anthropology at Fort Wayne Bible College reports on the Missions Executives Retreat held at Winona Lake, Indiana from October 4-8. The retreat was sponsored by the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association.

Particularly significant anthropologically were the recommendations drawn up as a result of two days of joint meetings between the missions executives and Christian educators. One of these reads: "We...recommend that liberal arts colleges give consideration to an anthropology major as a means to a missionary education." Also included in the conference report was a list of courses which were considered basic to the effective training of missionaries. High on this list were linguistics, anthropology and area studies. These recommendations are to be presented to the mission boards and to Christian schools.

Of considerable interest anthropologically was a paper presented by Dr. Milton G. Baker of Conservative Baptist Foreign Missions Society, which was entitled, "The Appointment of Non-Caucasian Missionaries." Dr. Baker mentioned the sometimes heard comment that 11:00 a.m. on Sunday is the most segregated hour of the week, and declared that we must confess with shame that the charge is true. He also made a number of pertinent observations concerning attitudes toward Negro and other non-Caucasian missionaries. Particularly important among these is that missionaries and others in "colonial" lands tend to lump all problems regarding Negro missionaries under the heading of "race" rather than dealing with each situation as an individual problem as is done when similar matters arise among white personnel.

Kraft Seeks Degree in Linguistics

Mr. Charles Kraft is working toward a Ph.D. in linguistics at the Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford, Connecticut. Mr. Kraft did his undergraduate anthropology work at Wheaton College.

Morse in Anthropology at Columbia

Miss Mary Lynn Morse is engaged in graduate study in anthropology at Columbia University. Miss Morse has done undergraduate work at Columbia Bible College.

Loptson Offers Course in Primitive Religion

Mr. Gordon P. Loptson of Western Canadian Bible Institute, Regina, Saskatchewan has introduced a course in primitive religion to supplement the general anthropology course. He also reports that the school's anthropology library, which consisted of only six books a short time ago, is growing rapidly. Mr. Loptson received his training at Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Rev. Lowell A. BAILEY; Jamaica Bible School; Mandeville, Jamaica; British West Indies
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PRACTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

General Index

Volumes I and II (1954-1955)

With the last issue of Vol. III (Nov.-Dec. 1956) the editors of PRACTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY are instituting a new policy of indexing the volumes annually. This index will be published in normal fashion at the end of the volume. To bring the indexing up to date, however, we are issuing this supplement for the first two volumes together.

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